

## Message Text

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11

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 /078 W

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R 220450Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4840

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONGKONG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KATHMANDU 1706

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, CH, NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL WELCOMES IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

1. PRESS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN QUICK TO HAIL INDIAN DECISION TO RESTORE RELATIONS WITH PEKING AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. PRIME MINISTER GIRI, ALTHOUGH SPEAKING BEFORE THE DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED, TOLD INDIAN JOURNALISTS IN CALCUTTA LAST WEEK THAT NEPAL WOULD WELCOME NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA AS BEING IN BEST INTERESTS OF NEPAL.

2. FORMER PRIME MINISTER TANKA PRASAD ACHARYA WHO, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, IS SEEN AS MAJOR PRO-CHINESE FIGURE IN NEPAL, ISSUED STATEMENT APRIL 20 PRAISING THE INDIAN DECISION. ACCORDING TO ACHARYA, IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS COULD HELP FURTHER NEPAL'S DESIRE TO BE DECLARED A ZONE OF PEACE. ACHARYA ALSO SAID THAT WHILE HE BELIEVED THAT NEPAL MUST MAINTAIN "POLITICAL EQUIDISTANCE" BETWEEN ITS NEIGHBORS, HE WAS IN FAVOR OF "BEST RELATIONS" WITH INDIA.

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3. THE PRESS, BOTH PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT, HAVE WELCOMED

THE DECISION TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS. NOT SURPRISINGLY THE PRO-CHINESE PAPERS, INCLUDING MATRIBHUMI, HAVE SAID THAT THE MOVE "ALTHOUGH BELATED" WILL FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS FOR ALL COUNTRIES OF THE REGION AND WILL HELP TO THWART THE "DESIGNS OF SUPER POWERS IN SOUTH ASIA." PRO-INDIAN PAPERS SUCH AS NEPALI AND SWATANTRA SAMACHAR HAVE EDITORIALIZED THAT NEPAL CAN ONLY PROFIT AS SUSPICIONS DECREASE BETWEEN HER TWO LARGER NEIGHBORS.

4. COMMENT: MFA OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED ARE ALSO QUICK TO SAY THAT ANY IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS IS WELCOME, PROVIDED IT IS NOT AT NEPAL'S EXPENSE. THEY AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THIS FIRST STEP WILL BE MINIMAL, BUT AT LEAST ONE (B.P. RIMAL, IN CHARGE OF INDIA DESK) EXPRESSED HOPE THAT GRADUAL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS COULD HAVE IMPACT ON CURRENT NEGATIVE INDIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL.  
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